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MOSES

A Rocky Mountain Sketch

EDGAR W. WORK

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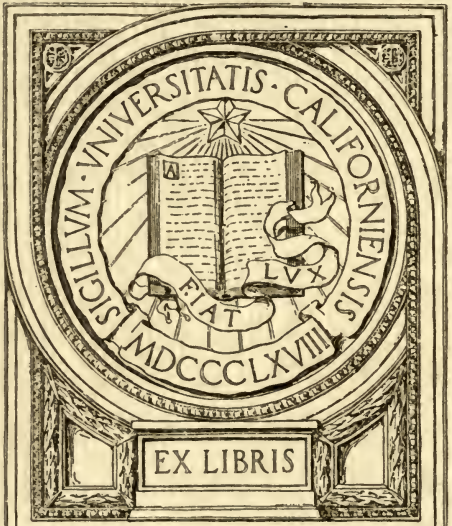

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"MOSES"

A ROCKY MOUNTAIN SKETCH

SECOND EDITION

By EDGAR W. WORK

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Edgar W. Work
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DEDICATION.

To THE friends and helpers of Home Missions everywhere, and especially to the Woman's Missionary Society of Berkeley, this little story of the Lord's work in our own western land is affectionately dedicated.

"MOSES"

A ROCKY MOUNTAIN SKETCH

The scene was one which memory will always cherish. It was more than Edenic, except that we have never thought of Eden as among the mountains. There were a mountain lake, and a mountain village, and mountain people, and, above all, there were the mountains themselves, than which God has made nothing greater in this inanimate world, the ocean not excepted.

At the time of the opening of this tale of the mountains, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. The afternoon sun lay aslant the little mountain lake, and spread itself like a carpet of gold over the cabins of the miners that made up the village. The gray peaks that shut in the view on the farther side already shone russet and gold in the sleeping rays of the waning day.

If the soul of the miner had not been made sordid by his search for gold, every day must have belonged to the halcyon days, under the shadow of those mighty, solemn mountain summits, which daily mirrored themselves in the placid waters of the little lake. In the morning, when the door of the cabin was opened, the fresh sunlight poured in past the gray mountains. Later, the grays gave way to deep blues and purples, and toward evening each separate summit seemed to be an inexhaustible mine of gold. Such silences as inhabited that mountain scene! The only sound of disturbance, whatsoever, was the sound of human carousal, for the village, innocent looking as it was, contained the elements of flame and explosion. Nightly, the year around, including Sunday, the saloons and gambling places were like a pent-up hell. Toward the small hours of the night the flames usually burst forth, and often the miners' village was more like pandemonium than a natural Eden. Yet nature never lost her quiet calm and self-possession in that high altitude.

The noise and alarm and sin of man could not break the native silences of those rock ribbed hills.

Here and there among the rough mining men was one whose poetry of soul had not yet been buried beneath the avalanche of sin. To such, the scenes and sounds of nature would often appeal, to soften hearts that were already grown too hard. The deer trod noiselessly the pathways of pine needles. The mother grouse called her brood about her in the thick growth of quaking aspens. The beaver swam cautiously to and fro in the lake, building his curious home. The splash of the oar, or the swish of the fisherman's line, or the click of his reel were sometimes heard. In the night-time the brush of the owl's wings momentarily disturbed the sleeper, as the bird of the night hastened his flight past an open cabin window. Sometimes the dogs rushed out to attack a porcupine, but soon returned in painful repentance.

The thunder often rolled like distant cannonading in the far-away summits, never yet touched by foot of man, deepening and emphasizing the silence.

A flower-bespangled scene, too! Along the way to the cold spring, a few hundred yards from the edge of the village, one could count a score and

more of varieties of flowers, some of them so modest and fairylike as to fail, almost, of attracting the eye.

The wild geranium, the mountain aster, the Indian pink, the elk flower, the bluebell, the blue flax, were there. And the columbine!—rich rare flower of the mountains, clad sometimes in royal white and blue, again in gorgeous red and yellow.

Far up the mountain sides, where timber ceased to grow, and bare rocks held sway, myriads of tiny blue forget-me-nots, fragrant as hot-house violets, taught anew the lesson of the survival of beauty above the roughness of the world. "Some root of knighthood and of nobleness" is in the world still, so taught our poet-optimist.

The pine forests, rich and fragrant, the sky both near and clear, the limpid waters that seemed able to reflect even the contents of the soul, the pure air that seemed to tingle in each least capillary between vein and artery, the freedom and vastness and solemn goodness of the mountains themselves that brushed away, perforce, every false human conventionality, yet kept each proper restraint of goodness and opened, as it seemed, every

wide doorway of the heart for the entrance of true thought—these were the finishing touches of nature in this scene of the heart's culture.

Our romance of the mountains might be left just here, perhaps preferably so, for no romance is so perfect as that of nature. When man steps in, there is more or less disturbance. Yet, happily, there are everywhere to be found the elements of human romance. Out there in the mountains, far away from the older centers of civilization, where nature is wild and animals are wilder, and man is often the wildest of all, there are men who are walking the heights of heroism, with a light upon their faces never seen on land or sea. Yet, all unconscious of their merit, like him of the shining face whose story is in Holy Writ, they work the works of Him that sent them.

The mountains, they say, will either make or mar a man. Perhaps it is a question of original endowment. A good man will grow better, and a bad man worse in the high altitudes, where breathing and all else means struggle.

It was such a man--a man with the stuff that is heroic, packed away beneath his well-knit, ath-

letic frame—who arrived in the village of Goldton on that afternoon, years ago. There are still remaining some who can tell you how he looked the day he came. Not that he received any special welcome; on the contrary, nobody cared at all. In the saloons and gambling-places the miners made merry over his coming about their tables, on the evening of his arrival. They at once gave him a name. They dubbed him "Moses." "Because," said a rough-shod miner, with some reminiscence of his early Bible knowledge, "because he's come up into the mountains to receive the law."

"And he'll receive it, too, quicker than he thinks," said another with flushed cheeks and eyes that flashed fire. "We'll teach him the law fast enough." It was a long time before "Moses," as they ever afterwards called him, heard of this conversation. He might have suffered a momentary tremor, if he had heard it sooner, but it would have made no difference in his plans. There is no use to pretend that this missionary was superhuman. Nothing of the sort. He was very human ; but it was a fine kind of hu-

manity that ran in his veins and arteries, and knitted his bones together. He was, of course, from one of the eastern States. Everybody in the West looks back over his shoulder at the East. His family was as good as any other, the matter of family merit being largely imaginary, anyway. The worth of the man rests with himself.

When John Compton — that was his name — graduated from college and later from the theological seminary, people expected him to step at once into a pulpit in one of the larger towns. John Compton had no such notion. He graduated in May, spent the summer months resting at his father's home, married the woman of his choice in August, and immediately afterwards the newly wedded pair turned their faces toward the Rocky Mountains, to evangelize in that far-away land. It was years ago, as we have intimated, and it may be inferred that the bridal trip was not made with all the comforts of a modern continental journey. Let that pass. They were going to their chosen work, and were not expecting to be comfortable. They were enthusiastic and eager, she

just as much as he. The minister's bride had a certain beauty of her own. She was what Thackeray called a 'brown beauty." No doubt he meant the quiet kind of beauty that does not sparkle and scintillate, but lasts a long time.

Compton had offered himself to the Board of Home Missions, and they had said, "Will you go to the Rocky Mountains?" Compton had replied, promptly, "I will." When he received his appointment to Goldton, he little suspected that the Board was sending him to the most difficult place in the whole mountain range.

The ride over the mountain trail was like a dream to the missionary and his wife. They were both endowed with latent poetry of soul and the scenery readily awakened it.

When at length the trail led up to a slight eminence, and let them look down upon the village and the lake, with the gray mountains round about, punctured, as it seemed, by a thousand holes, where the human animal had burrowed for precious ores, their enthusiasm knew no bounds, yet simultaneously came a tinge of homesickness. Indeed, if the truth must be told, we shall have

to say that when they were alone in the log inn of Goldton, and when the realization was full upon them that they were actually on their field of labor, that they had left behind friends and comforts and privileges of the East, and were really shut in from the world, they grew suddenly serious, and looked one another in the face.

Every woman, and perhaps every man can guess what the young bride did. She laid her brown head upon the strong shoulder of her athletic husband—*and cried*, for it is every woman's privilege to do this. It seems almost a missing link in the economy of a man's nature that the outlet of tears is denied him. When he feels sad there is nothing in the world for him to do but just quietly to bear it.

It would require a book to tell the full story of the work of John Compton and his wife in the heart of the Rockies. In this brief sketch we can only relate some incidents, calculated to show in strong light the talent, the tact, the consecration, the heroism, of the men and women of their stamp, who have not counted their lives dear to themselves, but have gone out from the comforts

and amenities of the East into the great and rugged West, under the honorable title of home missionaries.

As to the beginning of Compton's work—well, it was a long time before he knew that he had even made a beginning. The day following their arrival, they hired two vacant log cabins. In one they were to make their home. The furniture was meager, for the salary was meager. The Board had said to Compton, ''The best we can do is $600 per year.''

They had bought a little furniture on the way, and the young housekeeper had brought an extra trunk of small household belongings from her own home. Ere long it was as cozy as taste and economy could mak it. The other cabin was for the church services. With his own hands ''Moses'' —the name was not long in reaching Compton's ears—made a platform, and some benches, and a rough desk for the preacher.

At all these preparations the community looked in silence. There were some who looked sullen, and there was many a threatening word heard in the bar rooms, which might have discomfited

the young minister and his wife. Happily, they were unconscious of all this, and went cheerily on with their preparations.

The first Sabbath—well, Compton afterwards said that it was the most disheartening day he ever spent; but no one would have guessed it. He had that rare trait, the cultivation of which Emerson advised, "If you lack in courage, let no one know of it." After all his elaborate preparations, after the community had watched his arrangements going on for over a week, and after the entire town, not excepting a single soul, had been advised of the services—well, there were just three persons at the first service, the minister, and his wife, and one other person.

They waited long past the hour, the minister and his wife occasionally conferring together, and the other person sitting still in a dark corner of the cabin, seemingly resigned to the situation. Then the minister arose and began the service. Would you believe it?—he never flinched, but went through the service as if a large audience were present. It must be confessed that Compton paid little attention to the other person, who sat

in his dark corner. It was the first time his wife had heard him preach, which only heightens our admiration for his courage. In the early days, a minister is more afraid of his wife than of any other person. After a while his fears change to pity. Probably the person to be most commiserated in all the community is the minister's wife, not because she is so closely watched, not because everybody notices it if she happens to wear last year's bonnet, or notices it if she happens to buy a new one, but she is to be commiserated because she has to hear her husband preach. Think of it! Year in and year out, no relief even in vacation time, twice on Sunday, and on Wednesday nights, with a score or so of special addresses thrown in. Think of it! Two hundred times a year, for five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty years. Other members of the congregation can find relief in various ways. They can come to one service on Sabbath only, or they can absent themselves wholly from the week-night service; and then, there is the vacation—what an oasis of rest to the tired congregation! But the poor wife—rain or shine, summer or winter, she must patiently bear it all without

complaining. The marvel is that the country has not been compelled to build asylums of rest solely for the benefit of ministers' wives. And yet, some of them really do seem to be happy.

Compton's wife was happy the day of the first service in Goldton. Mary Compton's private thought was that she had never heard such a sermon from such a preacher in all her life. What a beautiful provision of the wise Providence that our wives think us so much better than we really are! It is the way nature has of protecting them. Nature blinds their eyes, and saves them from the asylum.

Now, as a matter of fact, John Compton was not a great preacher at all, and never would be, but he was in dead earnest. He had a way of striking fire upon the anvil of the human breast. He was gifted, not with eloquence, but, what is far better, with the power of sympathetic understanding and of direct appeal. His text that day, before an audience of two, was the ringing message of Jehovah to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." He wanted to say to the people of Goldton, if they

had been there, that this was God's message to them. He intended even to intimate that he had himself been sent to say this to them, and he hoped that they would receive the word of the Lord. The sermon could not have been any stronger if all of Goldton had been there. Compton threw his whole soul into it. His wife, Mary, was convinced, beyond a peradventure of a doubt, that this was what Goldton ought to do. The man in the dark corner sat through the sermon like the Sphinx. When the benediction was pronounced he shot out of the house like an arrow from the bow. Compton learned afterwards that he was stone deaf, and a Scotchman besides. The latter quality, at least, would forbid him ever going forward, for Scotchmen make it a rule, generally, not to do what they are advised to do.

When they reached their own cabin, John Compton said to his wife, "Mary, it was dreadful, wasn't it?"

"No, John," said she, courageously, "it was the best service I ever attended."

And this was the beginning in Goldton. Late

in the afternoon of that memorable Sabbath day, Compton excused himself, saying, "Mary, I am going out for a little walk." He turned up a deep canyon, and then up another that opened into it from the right, and after half an hour's climb he reached a flat top, where above him he could see only the gray peaks piercing the sky, and below him, like a checker-board, lay, spread out, his first parish—the village of Goldton.

In his twenty years' pastorate in Goldton the missionary came many times to this retreat, where God seemed ever near. So far as he knew, the foot of another man never touched the spot. There he was alone with God. His wife never knew what he did there, only she knew that when his steps turned towards the dark canyon, there was some burden on the missionary's heart, and he went to wrestle alone with the angel of prayer. When he came down there was usually a quiet light on his face, and an indefinable calm and poise which lasted for hours and days. In after years, the town came to have a tacit understanding that the missionary's visits to the canyon meant power in the sermons.

"'Moses' is going to the canyon," one would say to another, on Saturday afternoon, as he passed along the street leading in that direction. "He will do our souls good tomorrow."

As this is only a sketch, and not a continuous narrative, we are only entitled to mention here and there an incident of the work in Goldton. It could be summed up, indeed, almost in a single sentence, like that sentence where the apostle Paul tells of his buffetings and scourgings and shipwrecks and imprisonments. No man or minister, except it be the apostle Paul, ever had a harder struggle than the missionary of Goldton and his equally heroic wife. It would have done your heart good to see how that small wife of his stood by him, and encouraged him, and how together they battled for a victory. In those days "Moses" went almost daily up the dark canyon, usually late in the day, and came down with the strange light on his face, like that light which sailors at sea sometimes see playing about the tops of the masts.

Goldton was dead set against the gospel. They would have none of it. Like the unclean spirit

of the Gospels, they seemed to cry out: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?" One dark night there was a loud explosion, and in an hour's time the cabin where the services were held had gone up in flames.

The whole of the next day the missionary spent in the dark canyon. A week later he had the logs on the ground for a new cabin, and in a month's time the building was up. It was half as large again as the old one, and had a churchly look that the other one lacked. The miners laughed in their sleeves.

"He needs a little more law," said one, the same who had first dubbed the missionary "Moses," and threatened to show him the law.

"But, I tell you what, boys, he's got grit,' said another, whose eyes were just a trifle softer than the others.

"Oh, shut up, Hank!" exclaimed a chorus of rough voices in the gambling-hall where the conversation took place; "no weak knees. We'll drive him out o' here. We want to be let alone."

It is useless to say that Compton and his wife were not undisturbed by what they heard and saw daily about them. Being a woman, Mary was tortured by fear both day and night. If the truth be told, the wife of the missionary in these hard places has the heavier burden to carry.

"Mary," her husband would say, "the tide will turn. I feel it beginning to turn already."

It is to be feared that the good man was talking for encouragement, much as a boy will whistle when he is afraid. But no one in Goldton ever once suspected that the breast of the strongly-built young minister who walked up and down the streets, speaking cheerily to every passer-by, occasionally stopping to talk with the children, ever knew fear. He reckoned that a man who did his duty fearlessly would, in due time, at least win respect—a principle worth adopting anywhere.

A few persons came every Sabbath to the services, but there were no visible fruits of the work. Some children were gathered into Sabbath school, and the missionary's wife gradually gained the friendship of some of the women, but

this was at the risk of the displeasure of their husbands. The miners, be it said, were many of them men of intelligence. Not a few of them were college graduates. In the later times, when the softening process had begun, and one and another of these hardened men had begun to drop into the services, he surprised "Chap" Simonton, one evening, by calling upon him in prayer-meeting to read a verse from the Testament he held in his hand. "Chap" arose and read his verse from the Greek Testament. "Chap" told the missionary afterwards that nearly one-fourth of the men, like himself, were college students from the East. It was in the early days of Rocky Mountain migration. This only intensified the missionary's desire to win these men to Christ.

Meantime, the dark looks continued, and the hatred of the men seemed to grow no less. We may as well relate right here one or two incidents that represented the climax of the opposition. There was a short period about this time when the missionary thought that he had better give up, and his wife, consulting her fears, was sure

of it. The men had begun to come to the services, but they came to mock and to disturb. It was seldom that a service passed without some annoying incident. One day two men in a rear pew seemed to have a discussion during the sermon. Presently they arose and went out. In a moment shots were heard. Every man, of course, carried his pistol in his belt in plain sight, and sudden recourse was often taken to the arbitrament of arms.

At the first exchange of shots all the men in the rear left pell-mell, and by the time a half dozen shots were heard, the entire congregation had gone out to witness the fight. Of course, the whole affair had been set up by the men themselves. Incidents like this were numerous. If the missionary flinched, he did it internally, never externally.

At length the supreme trial came. You remember the deaf man who sat in the dark corner at the first service? Well, Compton had more than once thanked God for that service, and for that man. He never heard a word of the sermons or the prayers, but he had seen the light

on the missionary's face, and he believed in the man. And now there came positive proof of the Scotchman's devotion. One Wednesday night, after prayer-meeting, he followed Compton home, and when they were well within doors, he whispered into his ear what he had learned. He had not rightly heard, he said, but he knew it to be true. The gang, he said, intended, on the next Sabbath, to break up the service, throw "Moses" out bodily, if necessary, and end at once by force the gospel campaign in Goldton.

Compton listened, and was compelled to believe that it was probably true. For the remainder of the week he carried the burden alone, for he dared not tell his wife. On Saturday afternoon he disappeared up the canyon. Sabbath morning dawned—a perfect Rocky Mountain day, with air as clear as crystal, and the clouds no larger than a man's hand. He knew that the disturbance would not come, if it came at all, until the evening service. In the afternoon the Scotchman returned and confirmed his first message. The gang was to be on hand, and they had vowed that "Moses" should never preach again in Goldton.

Compton entered the pulpit promptly on the hour in the evening. One glance over the congregation left no doubt in his mind. Every member of the gang was present. There was perfect, even ominous silence. There were only significant glances, and the midnight on a half a dozen countenances that he knew so well was a shade darker and deeper than usual.

The first church of Goldton had not yet been able to afford the luxury of a pulpit Bible. The missionary had long hoped that some eastern church would send them one, but it had not come as yet. He usually carried his own well-worn Bible into the pulpit. And now he laid it quietly down on the rough hewn desk. They were watching him with the eyes of hawks. Having laid his Bible down, he reached in his inside coat pocket, and took out something else, which he laid on top of the Bible. Would you believe it?—the missionary had laid a shining six-shooter on his Bible. His manner was very quiet, and there was no tremor of excitement. He had not yet said a word. What he did say was what he usually said in the opening of the

service, and it was in the calmest and most self-possessed tones imaginable, "Brethren, let us pray."

When John Compton closed his eyes in prayer, he did not know but that he might open them the next moment in glory, for the hatred of those wild men, who were "without God in the world," was intense and bitter. Fortunately, the missionary's wife was absent that evening. She would certainly have fainted with fear. The prayer passed, a simple, briefly-worded petition for divine help and guidance and for the blessing upon every soul in the divine presence. "O Lord," one petition of the prayer ran, "put thine own love into our hearts, that fear and hatred may be cast out." This was as near as he came to referring to the incidents of the day. When the missionary opened his eyes—no, they were not weeping, any of them. It might be so in a novel. They were not weeping, but Compton was sure that there was a subdued look on the faces of those hardened men. Certainly, they were a very much surprised lot of men. This was a new deal for a minister of the gospel to be-

gin his service with pistol and prayers and psalms intermingled. Not a man of them was afraid of the missionary's "gun," as they called it—that was an every-day occurrence; but, somehow, a new and strange feeling of awe before the man himself crept into their hearts. There was something here that they had not reckoned upon. The service was the most quiet and the most effective one yet held, and the congregation filed out without the hootings and howlings which usually followed.

When Compton described the service to his wife at home, Mary burst out crying, and her husband, the strain being over, easily joined her. Then they sank involuntarily upon their knees and thanked God for deliverance.

Down at Forbish's saloon the men discussed the incident until one o'clock in the morning, and became so absorbed that even the drinks sat for hours untasted. Their rough sense of justice had been appealed to. Their quick admiration for manly courage had been touched.

"Boys," said one, "he's the right stuff."

"Wasn't he quiet about it, though?" said another.

"Yes, and I'm blamed if I don't believe he would have used it, too, if he'd a had to," said another.

The upshot of it was that there was the beginning, that night, of the formation of a little company of the men, with "Hank" Tomlinson as their leader, whose quiet purpose was to stand by "Moses." The tide was turning. The breast of the opposition was broken.

We hasten to relate another incident which further marked the turning of the tide. It was at prayer-meeting. Few of the men ever came to the prayer-meeting—a fault not confined to the uncivilized mountains. One of them came on this particular evening. The missionary was in the midst of the lesson, when the door opened and drunken Sampson McGregor came staggering down the aisle.

"Samp," as he was called for short, was a great, brawny Scotchman, who had come out and staked a claim up Bear's Gulch, but nobody ever learned of his working it. He was too busy pursuing his appetite. They said in Goldton that he never ate at all, he only drank, drank

morning, noon, and night. Yet everybody in Goldton was "Samp's" friend.

Down the aisle he came, swaying heavily from side to side in the vain effort to steer a straight course, and sat down on the front seat, directly opposite the missionary's wife, and almost in front of the missionary himself. Poor little Mary noted with consternation that his pistol hung in his belt. She thought her husband's hour had come. Presently, having finished his remarks, the missionary said, "Let us have two or three short prayers. Who will lead us voluntarily?"

The congregation bowed their heads. There was a momentary pause—one of those dread prayer-meeting pauses. Then there was a heavy shuffling of feet. It was evident to those who sat near, that "Samp" McGregor was getting down on his knees. It was true, and in another moment the drunken Scotchman was leading the congregation of Goldton in prayer. What led him to this strange act nobody could tell. Afterwards no one doubted that it was the Spirit of God.

At any rate, there was no stopping him, when

he had once begun. Indeed, as he went on, no one wanted to stop him. What a prayer it was ! At first maudlin and incoherent, as became his condition, it gradually passed into coherent utterance. The man was actually "sobering up" under the influence of his own prayer. Its dominant note was that of internal agony. It was the man in the tombs of our Lord's miracle, wrenching and straining at his chains. Or, at least, it was Jacob in the night-time wrestling on with the mysterious angel, not knowing that the day would ever break. But the most pathetic thing about the prayer was its tone of reminiscence. Plainly, the man on his knees had forgotten the presence of his fellow-men. As he prayed, the leaves of memory unfolded, and he was living his early life over again. If it be true that true prayer is the soul's history, past, present, and future, the prayer of "Samp" McGregor well illustrated this thought. His father had been a minister, and this came out in his prayer. The white "kirk" on the hill came up before the congregation like a picture, as the wanderer prayed on. They saw his father

standing in the high pulpit. They saw the plain-faced mother, with tears in her eyes. They saw the children in the Sabbath school, and the group about the fireside in the evening with the catechism and the Bible verses. They saw the Scotch laddie scouting the hills of his native place, playing with his collie, rolling in the heather, climbing the trees, wading in the brawling brooks. Then the picture grew dark as the prayer wandered on and the Scotchman's knowledge of Bible scenes and phraseology seemed to roll back upon him like a flood. It was the scene of the prodigal that was picturing itself to him as he prayed. "O God," he prayed, "I'm doon amang the swine, and I've naethin left but the husks. Gi'e me a leetle strength, O God, an' I'll arise and go to my father, an' tell him what a fool I've been, and what a sinner."

After a while—no one knew how long it had been—the prayer ended, ended like a stream running into the ground, as by sheer exhaustion; no, rather, ended like a path running up a dark canyon of the mountains, and coming at last to a bright resting-place on the top of the world.

When "Samp" McGregor arose from his knees he was more sober than he had been in ten years; but one thing immediately overwhelmed him—he had disgraced the church of his fathers. On this point the missionary quickly reassured him. It goes without saying that there were no dry eyes in the Goldton prayer-meeting that night. It is not for us to say whether "Samp" was converted there on his knees in the prayer-meeting, but one thing is certain—he was a different man ever afterwards.

The incident traveled through the camp like wildfire. "'Samp' McGregor prayed in prayer-meeting last night," was the common greeting next morning.

"Was he sober?"

"He was when he got through," was the reply.

Some laughed, but the effect of this strange incident upon the Goldton miners, many of whom were men of like history, who had wandered away from the Father's house, was to bring a little nearer that mysterious kingdom of grace and of the Spirit, whose coming is "not with observation."

The next Lord's day "Moses" preached with wonderful pathos and power. He never once referred to the incident, but every one had it in mind. To this day, the sermon is spoken of in Goldton as "the great sermon." At the time, they described it as "one of his canyon sermons." It was known that the missionary spent all of Saturday up the dark canyon. On the Sabbath the mysterious light was plainly visible. His text was that great passage in Romans, the eighth chapter, where the apostle speaks about spiritual death and spiritual life: "They that are after the things of the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Men are like trees, he said to them, simply. You have gone through the forest and noted that some trees are dead. They are standing still, and even look very strong, but they are dead. The spring comes around, and you look to see them bud out and grow again, like other trees, but they never do. They are dead. It is this way with men. They die spiritually because of their

sins. "To be carnally minded is death." When a tree is once dead, there is no hope for it. It is not even fit for lumber, because the vitality is gone out of it. But it is different with men; there is still hope for a man who is dead in his sins. God has set life to work to defeat death. Up there in the gulches, or on the mountain sides, he went on, where you daily labor with pick and spade and drill, you know how you have to work, day in and day out, to "strip" the mine, and get down to something of value. Then a day comes, a day of joyful discovery—you have struck the rich vein. Now, did it ever occur to you what ages upon ages it took God to get that vein ready for you, what working of the mysterious chemistry of nature, so that you might come some day and run your drill in and "strike it rich"? It is just so with this gospel of salvation. It was a long time preparing, but it's all ready; and you can come and live spiritually, and be rich spiritually, in this mine of God's making. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." "If Christ be in you the spirit is life because of righteousness." So he went on. As the sermon closed,

the missionary led them to think about being the sons of God, by true repentance and faith. "For as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." Then he told them how they would know that they were God's sons. They would have the witness of his Spirit in their hearts. And if they were sons of God, they would also be heirs, and they would join fortunes with Christ, who is God's Son and the world's Saviour, for ever and ever.

Thus he led them up to the mountain tops, and many a soul in the audience that day had the transforming vision, which, in some manner, must come soon or late to every soul that will live.

Then the missionary prayed. It was just a tender leading of their thoughts a little farther up the altar-stairs to the bright throne.

"Now," he said, "it is the hour of decision. It is the time for some to say what they intend to do." This was the day the missionary had been waiting and praying for all of five years. "Who will stand up here among his fellow-men and say, I want to be God's son?"

You are hardly ready to believe it, but it is

true—instantly six of those hardened miners arose and started down the aisle, and the missionary saw them coming, and went down from the platform to meet them, and took them each one by the hand. It was "Hank" Tomlinson who spoke, and there was a tremble in his voice :

" 'Moses,' " said he—no one in Goldton ever dreamed of any impropriety in using that name —" 'Moses,' if you'll forgive us, we ll ask God to forgive us, too, and we'll stand by you and God through thick and thin."

This is how the flood-gates of the soul were opened in Goldton. In the mountains the snow gathers in the winter and fills the canyons, until with the early days of spring a thaw sets in, and the waters begin to rush down. Winter had long held sway in the hard heart of the miner, but the spring had come and the thaw had set in.

There is no use to follow the tale from this on. The saloons were not all closed, neither were the gambling-places all abandoned, neither was sin wholly destroyed in Goldton. Such conditions come not on this earth, because the "new Jerusalem" has not yet been let down. Nevertheless,

righteousness and joy and peace began to reign there as never before.

If anything had been needed to cement the camp in their affection for "Moses," and to open their hearts wider to his ministry of the word, it was the incident of the forest fire, which transpired not long after "the great sermon." In the Rockies the "black beast" of the mountaineer is not so much the lion or the grizzly, as the dread forest fire. The year of which we write was the year of the famous fires in the mountains, when thousands of acres were burned over. To this day the sides of the mountains, in large sections, look like the masts of vessels crowded together in the harbor In other places the quaking aspen has grown up in the stead of tall pines. Goldton felt safe from the invasion of fire, because there were canyons on every side. For days they had seen great volumes of smoke rolling over the country a hundred miles away. The evil hour came in the night time. A miner, awakening, discovered that the fire was burning on the mountain not over three miles from the village. The alarm was soon given, and the people of Goldton

arose to see their peril. Strange to say, those hardy men of the pick and the drill, who were used to almost every danger known to man, who would not hesitate to stand without the twitching of a muscle before the muzzle of a six-shooter, had no head for this catastrophe that threatened. They were panic-stricken, and there was no leader among them. In a moment of confusion, one proposing this and another that, a man came running down the street of the village, hatless and coatless, a pick in one hand and a spade in another.

" It's 'Moses,' " exclaimed a dozen voices. It was not the first time that the missionary had inspired them with confidence.

"Come on, boys, bring your tools," he shouted. "We must dig a ditch at the exposed place."

There were mountain streams on two sides of the town, but the fire could easily break in between at the exposed end. With a shout of confidence, they followed the missionary, and set to work with a will, his strong arms and athletic frame bending to the task as willingly as theirs.

To make a long story short, it was a hard fight

and a long one, but they won the day. When Goldton looked out from the charmed circle the next morning, upon the charred country about, they realized once more that their "Moses" was "a man sent from God."

Well, there is much more to tell, but this, at least, was how the locked doors were unbarred. Five years had gone by—years of untold faith and toil and patience. In those years the salary stood the same. The Board wrote often that they would like to raise it to six hundred and fifty or seven hundred. "But, alas!" wrote the secretary, "the churches in the East seem to have lost faith in home missions, and have cut down their gifts."

If the churches in the East could only have looked down into the valley where Compton and his wife labored so self-sacrificingly, would they not have repented and made their gifts larger instead of smaller?

In the five years the missionary's home was gladdened twice by the missionary-box, prepared by deft hands of the successors of Lydia and Dorcas in some church east of the Mississippi.

What a day it was when the box came! It was like a breeze out of some warmer clime to those devoted souls up in the mountains.

They never could know, those Christian women in the eastern church, how they warmed the hearts, as well as the bodies, of their brother and sister in Christ.

It is only necessary to add that, shortly after the revival began, which dated from "the great sermon," the congregation came together to organize a church in proper form. They elected three elders; they were Hankin Tomlinson, Sampson McGregor, and the deaf Scotchman who sat in the corner at the first service. When they came to elect a pastor, "Samp" McGregor made the nominating speech, which no reporter in the land could ever have reproduced on paper. It is enough to say that it was a "spell-binder." He began with the day of the arrival of the missionary and his wife, and ended with the day of the fire. At the end of the speech he nominated a pastor. It is needless to say who was "Samp's" nominee.

Were they heroes? No, they were just ordinary home missionaries, gifted with faith and courage.

But this also we know. If we were writing a supplement to that passage in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where a list of the faithful is given, right after Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthae and David and Samuel, we should wish to insert the names of John and Mary Compton, home missionaries in Goldton by the grace of God, and then we should be even more content to read on to the end: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. . . . Of whom the world was not worthy."

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